Met Office

NEWS

Met Office specialists support COVID-19 research effort

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A range of skills and resources are being used to support researchers combating the COVID-19 pandemic

The Met Office is assisting COVID-19 researchers and organisations at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic. From data support to supercomputer (HPC) capacity, the Met Office is helping the scientific community however it can in the ongoing research into COVID-19.

A dedicated working group has been set up to establish how the expertise and technology at the Met Office could support any ongoing efforts in the scientific community.

To date some of the work the group has overseen includes a project to make global meteorological data available to researchers looking into how environmental factors could influence the disease and another to open up spare capacity of our HPC to aid modelling through an initiative called Folding@Home.

As an organisation the Met Office has not been immune to the impacts of COVID-19 and the measures taken to control it. Many observations that are used to create the weather forecast come from aviation. Any impacts on the Met Office forecast to date are generally within the 'noise' of week-to-week variability in forecast skill that we already see due to our changing weather. Our experts are monitoring this very closely to keep our forecasts accurate. Specialists have also adjusted how our air quality forecast is modelled. With far fewer vehicles on the road the usual baseline levels of emissions have been recalculated to improve accuracy during the lockdown.

In the Met Office Hadley Centre research is ongoing into the implications of COVID-19 control measures on climate change. With such wide-ranging restrictions on movement there has been a significant change in emissions output. A key question for climate change is what impact this has had on the overall amount of CO2 in the atmosphere – the principal driver of global temperature rise. Analysis by a number of scientists led by Professor Richard Betts MBE has found that the current emissions cut will not make a significant long-term contribution to curb climate change. The full analysis can be read in this Carbon Brief guest article and Met Office blog.

Met Office Chief Scientist Stephen Belcher, said: “The Met Office wants to help the scientific community however it can in the ongoing research into COVID-19. As well as making a range of meteorological data available to those researching COVID-19, our scientists are helping with modelling experience, supercomputer capacity and several other initiatives.

“Although not medical experts, our staff have significant expert knowledge on the science of modelling and the technical ability to conduct it and we are continually investigating how else we may be able to support.”

The working group will continue to assess how the expert knowledge at the Met Office could be of use to others across the world throughout the pandemic. Be that through scientific support or technological capacity.

During the lockdown restrictions, the Met Office has continued to function operationally with the vast majority of staff working from home. More information on how the Met Office is operating in these unprecedented times can be found on our COVID-19 information page.

The Met Office continues to publish all of our usual general public facing weather forecasts. You can check the latest weather warnings on our severe weather warnings pages and you can get the most accurate and up to date forecast for your area using our forecast pages and by following us on Twitter and Facebook, as well as using our mobile app which is available for iPhone from the App store and for Android from the Google Play store.

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